

# Prevention<sup>IN</sup>Action

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## First Step in Keeping Kids Drug-Free: Turn Statistics into Community Strategies and Programs

The *Burrillville Health and Wellness Survey* offers a wealth of information that enables the community to develop strategies to support teens who remain drug-free — and to help those who don't.

The 50-question survey, completed by more than 1,000 middle and high school students in 2015, provides the data we need to fortify the town's prevention infrastructure. It identifies "risk factors." For example, if teens believe marijuana won't harm them, they are at greater risk of trying it. "Protective factors" are also measured. If kids believe their parents and friends would disapprove, they are less likely to use alcohol and other drugs. The scope of teen drug use in town was also evaluated. Students were asked to self-report (anonymously) if they had used alcohol, marijuana or other drugs in the 30 days prior to the survey (see chart). Answers to all 50 questions are reported by grade level and gender.

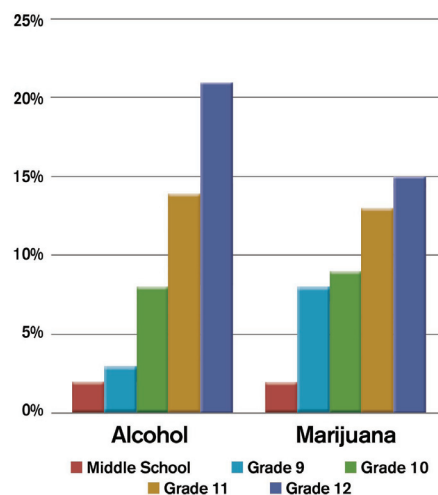
**Where we are today.** Prevention programs start by collecting data for two reasons. Scientifically collected data serves as a baseline to measure our progress year to year and data analysis suggests where we need to focus prevention efforts. So, where are we today?

### Some findings from the survey:

- Alcohol use rate increases most in 10th grade.
- Marijuana use begins for some in 8th grade but increases significantly in 9th grade.
- The highest percentage of marijuana users are in the 11th and 12th grade.
- Marijuana use is perceived as the substance with the least amount of potential risk for users.
- Perception of risk of harm for marijuana use declines rapidly as the students enter high school, and is the lowest for the 11th and 12th grade students.
- Perception of peer disapproval drops sharply once students enter high school.
- 90% of all Burrillville students perceived that their parents would disapprove of any form of substance use but among older students less than 90% say parents disapprove of alcohol and marijuana use.

Findings like these provide the information we need to shore up the weak points in the town's prevention infrastructure.

### Past 30-Day Use of Alcohol & Marijuana by Grade Level



*Students were asked to self-report (anonymously) if they had used alcohol, marijuana or other drugs in the 30 days prior to the survey. The chart shows the percentage of students at each grade level who reported drug use.*

**The need for community involvement.** There are evidenced-based strategies proven to reduce teen drug use but there is often an untapped goldmine of ideas in the community. Business owners, clergy, youth workers, town officials, health professionals — all 12 community sectors can review these findings from their perspectives and ask how they can help fortify the town's prevention infrastructure. Got an idea? We'd love to hear it. Please send your ideas and comments about the survey to [BPAC](#).



Next Issue: How the Business Community Can Support Prevention Efforts

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